

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement

July 2020





Foreword

We asked over 14,300 passengers across the country to rank a series of 30 possible improvements to their rail service in order of priority. The results provide a clear sense of passengers' aspirations and will ensure that their voice is heard when important strategic decisions about rail services and investment are made.

The research found passengers' top priority for improvement is 'reliability and punctuality'. Passengers want a reliable railway that delivers on the promise of the timetable day in and day out. Improving value for money is a close second and while passengers may not realistically expect prices to drop, they do expect the basic promises of the industry to be met in return for their fares. The third highest priority is getting a seat on the train. In recent years the railway has succeeded in attracting passengers but has increasingly struggled to provide the extra capacity to meet this demand. More and more services have run on increasingly congested infrastructure, often with a knock-on hit to reliability and punctuality. These basics - being reliably on time and getting a seat - also contribute to passengers' perceptions of value for money. These are the three key priorities to focus on to improve passengers' journeys.

Since the research was undertaken the railway has, like the rest of our lives, been dramatically changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. A busy and crowded network too often vulnerable to disruption and delays has, at the time of writing, been transformed into a much guieter, lower frequency, punctual railway. In the short-term Covid-19 is bound to have an impact on passengers' priorities – not least when it comes to personal safety, space on the train and cleanliness - but the baseline results will still be relevant. Punctuality, capacity and value for money will still be important in a post-lockdown world. In the long term people's innate desire for face to face contact and the looming challenge of climate change mean demand for rail travel will surely return and grow again. Investment should continue to focus on infrastructure and trains, to boost the resilience, reliability and capacity of the network for passengers.

Value for money could come under even greater pressure in future as individuals' and governments' finances feel the effects of the pandemic. If there must be fare increases in future they should be pegged with inflation, using the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) not the discredited (and typically higher) Retail Prices Index (RPI). Crucially governments and the rail industry need to have the courage to undertake long overdue fares reform. 'Split ticketing' has gnawed away at trust in the system. Changes in working practices will now have accelerated so demand for flexible season tickets must no longer be overlooked. The long-awaited Rail Review must tackle this and ensure the railway emerges fit to act on passengers' priorities.

Anthony Smith

Chief Executive, Transport Focus

Introduction

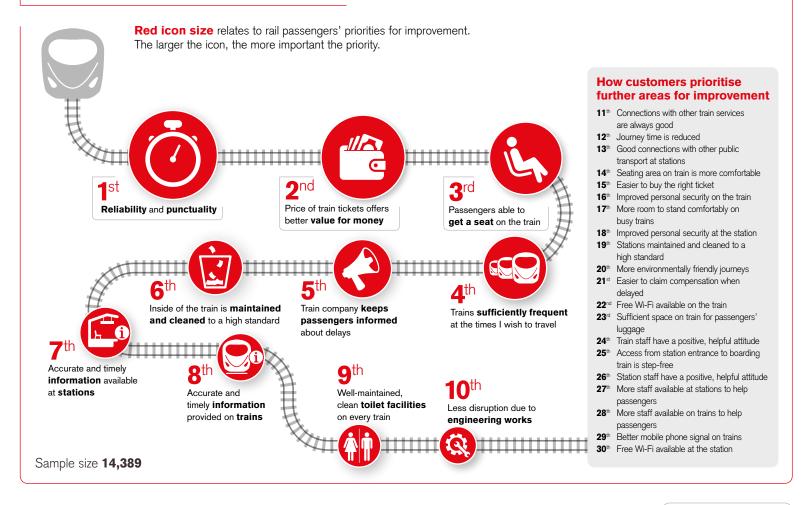
14,389 passengers across the country were asked to rank a series of 30 possible improvements to their rail service in order of priority. The highest priority for improvement is 'reliability and punctuality', followed closely by value for money and then getting a seat.

The large sample size allows the findings to be 'cut' in numerous ways, including by journey purpose, age, nation, region, train company and Network Rail route. Several of these analyses are highlighted in the remainder of this publication.

Bespoke analysis can also be carried out using a 'simulator' tool that can be used to run priorities for different sectors or groups of passengers. For example, reports can be run showing priorities just for commuters using a specific train company or to see priorities for passengers with a disability.

The simulator also allows users to remove specific priorities and to re-run the analysis – for example you could look at how priorities change if punctuality and reliability or value for money are excluded. The simulator tool, along with instructions on how to use it, can be found on our website.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement 2020



Findings

Overall priorities for improvement

The research used a methodology known as Maximum Difference Scaling (MaxDiff) which asks passengers to trade-off one priority for improvement against others. A fuller explanation of MaxDiff and the sampling plan used is given in Appendix A.

By using this technique we can present the results in terms of the rank order of priority (with one being the highest priority for improvement and 30 the lowest); and in terms of the relative order of priority (by how much more, or less, important one factor is compared to another).

The chart shows both the rank order and relative level of priority for passengers throughout Great Britain. To assess the relative ranking we use an index score. A score of 100 means that a criterion is of average importance; anything ranked over 100 has above average importance and anything below 100 has less than average importance. So, for example, an index of 150 means that it is 50 per cent more important than average; a score of 200 means it is twice as important as average; while a score of 50 means that it is half as important as average.

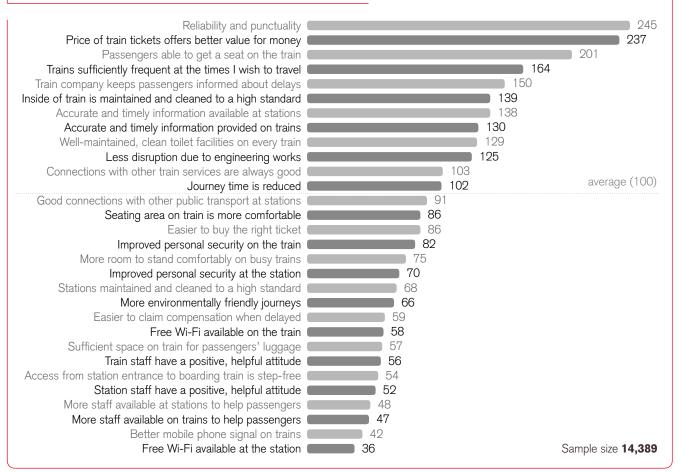
It is important to bear in mind that passengers were asked to rank these criteria in terms of their priority for improvement rather than how important it was to them overall. A lower score does not necessarily mean that something is unimportant as it could be very important but passengers are relatively happy with the way it is currently being delivered.

'Reliability and punctuality' is the highest priority for improvement, very closely followed by value for money. Both are almost two and half times higher than the

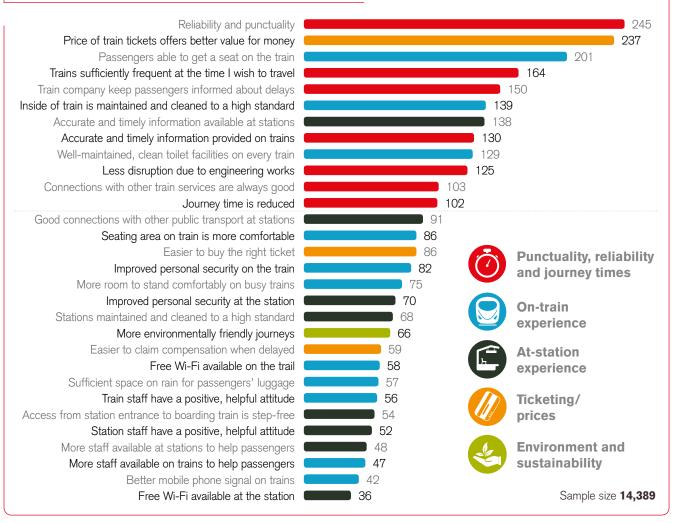
average. Next is getting a seat (at twice the average), a significantly higher priority for improvement than the

cluster of priorities that follow with less than 40 index points separating the fourth highest priority and the tenth.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement Great Britain



Rail passengers' priorities for improvement Great Britain



The chart on the left groups each priority according to the aspect of the passenger experience it is most closely connected to. Most of the remaining priorities with more than 100 ranking points (above average level of importance) are concerned with the timetable or journey information. Examples include train frequency (fourth priority), train company keeps passengers informed about delays (fifth) and fewer disruptions due to engineering works (tenth). The exceptions are those that relate to the experience onboard the train, for example maintenance and cleanliness of the inside of the train (sixth) and toilets on the train (ninth). Station improvements and concerns about sustainability rank lower down the list.

If we were to repeat this research today, while we get to grips with living with Covid-19, we might anticipate a temporary increase in the importance attached to getting a seat and cleanliness given the current concerns about social distancing, hygiene and health. The research was conducted right at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak; there is no clear evidence of either of these factors being given any greater priority to normal in this research (even towards the very end of the fieldwork period).

Overall, these findings are consistent with previous Transport Focus research. Our work consistently emphasises the need for a good core product. We also know that punctuality, getting a seat and the price of tickets are also at the heart of value for money assessments¹ – also partly explaining the prominence of value for money as a passenger priority.

Fares and Ticketing Study – Appendix A – Understanding drivers of satisfaction. 2009. Transport Focus.

Priorities by nation

Passengers key priorities are fairly consistent across England, Scotland and Wales. However, there are some differences, both value for money and getting a seat on the train are a slightly higher priority for passengers in Wales, while toilet facilities and train cleanliness are a higher priority for those in Scotland.



Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by nation

	Great I	Britain	Eng	land	Scot	tland	Wa	les
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	1	245	1	245	1	246
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	2	237	2	240	2	245
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	199	3	212	3	216
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	4	165	4	162	4	164
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	5	150	7	143	5	149
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	7	137	5	154	6	145
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	139	8	133	7	139
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	8	131	9	124	9	131
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	10	126	6	148	8	138
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	9	128	10	106	10	109
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	103	11	103	11	104
Journey time is reduced	12	102	11	104	12	95	14	90
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	13	91	14	92	13	90
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	15	85	13	94	12	94
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	14	86	15	92	15	85
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	16	83	16	77	16	80
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	17	76	19	64	17	76
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	18	71	20	64	20	66
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	19	68	17	75	19	69
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	20	66	18	68	18	74
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	21	61	26	51	27	49
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	22	58	23	58	23	57
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	23	57	22	60	21	62
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	24	55	21	63	22	59
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	25	54	25	51	26	49
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	26	51	24	57	24	54
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	27	48	28	47	28	47
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	28	47	27	47	25	49
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	29	43	29	39	29	34
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	37	30	33	30	31
Sample size*	14,389		12,498		1,268		623	

Priorities by journey purpose

'Reliability and punctuality' along with value for money are key improvement areas for all groups regardless of journey purpose. While the ranking order of priorities is similar, there are differences in the priorities between commuters, business and leisure passengers.

Commuters are more concerned about the core timetabled service, including with frequency of trains, disruption due to engineering works and journey times. While still not a high priority, commuters also place greater importance on making it easier to claim compensation for delays. They also place great emphasis on a robust, consistent, reliable delivery of the basic service.

For business and leisure passengers there is more of an emphasis on the quality of the journey. Business travellers are more concerned about staying connected while travelling, with greater emphasis on free Wi-Fi and a better mobile phone signal on the train. Leisure passengers are more concerned about getting a seat on the train and that toilets on trains are clean and well maintained.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by journey purpose

	Tota	I GB	Comi	muter	Busi	ness	Leis	sure
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	1	246	1	240	1	246
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	2	234	2	234	2	239
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	4	182	3	197	3	208
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	3	183	4	164	4	158
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	5	153	5	136	5	150
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	10	125	6	135	6	144
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	141	9	124	7	139
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	8	137	11	116	9	130
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	11	107	7	126	8	137
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	7	141	8	124	10	120
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	102	12	105	11	103
Journey time is reduced	12	102	9	128	10	119	13	91
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	13	93	14	92	14	91
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	15	81	13	94	15	87
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	18	72	15	90	12	91
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	17	76	18	74	16	86
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	14	88	16	80	19	69
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	20	66	21	64	17	72
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	22	64	20	67	18	70
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	19	68	19	72	20	65
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	16	78	23	63	26	52
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	21	64	17	79	25	53
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	26	48	24	59	21	60
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	25	49	25	52	22	59
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	23	51	27	49	23	55
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	27	47	28	47	24	54
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	29	43	30	42	28	50
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	30	41	29	42	27	50
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	24	50	22	64	29	37
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	28	43	26	49	30	32
Sample size*	14,389		3,275		1,321		9,759	

Priorities by rail industry sector

Key priorities are largely consistent across rail industry sectors. We have grouped results into the five broad categories (as used in the National Rail Passenger Survey): London and South East operators, long distance operators, regional operators, train companies serving airports and open access operators. Getting a seat is particularly important for journeys with long distance and open access operators. Airport operators show more differences, with a range of lower ranked priorities, including mobile signal and Wi-Fi at the station/on the train considered more important compared with other sectors.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by sector

	Great	Britain	London	and SE	Long-d	istance	Regi	onal	Air	port	Open	access
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	1	246	2	242	1	246	2	221	2	238
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	2	236	1	246	2	236	1	227	1	239
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	193	3	213	3	209	3	172	3	218
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	4	167	4	152	4	168	4	157	4	149
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	5	153	5	143	5	149	5	140	7	139
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	8	134	6	141	6	146	6	137	6	140
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	142	8	130	7	138	7	132	8	126
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	9	133	9	123	9	129	9	125	9	115
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	10	124	7	137	8	133	10	119	5	145
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	7	138	10	110	10	112	8	130	11	100
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	103	11	103	11	105	12	106	10	108
Journey time is reduced	12	102	11	107	12	101	12	95	11	113	16	89
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	13	93	15	88	13	92	13	95	12	94
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	16	80	13	94	14	91	18	79	17	83
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	14	84	14	93	16	85	15	91	13	92
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	15	82	17	75	15	85	14	91	14	91
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	17	76	18	73	17	75	16	80	19	66
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	18	71	22	63	18	72	17	80	18	77
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	19	67	21	67	19	72	21	72	20	66
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	20	66	19	70	20	65	22	69	22	65
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	21	62	23	62	25	52	20	73	26	56
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	23	56	20	67	23	56	19	78	21	65
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	26	50	16	76	21	60	26	53	15	90
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	24	55	24	56	22	58	27	49	23	62
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	22	57	25	50	26	49	23	61	25	56
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	25	51	26	50	24	53	30	46	27	55
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	27	49	29	44	28	47	28	48	28	53
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	28	47	28	45	27	48	29	47	24	57
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	29	42	27	48	29	38	24	57	30	31
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	36	30	40	30	35	25	55	29	35
Sample size*	14,389		7,703		3,637		4,553		322		179	

Priorities by age

While the key priorities remain the same, analysis by age also reveals some interesting differences. As may be expected, older passengers are more concerned with getting a seat on the train and with clean, well-maintained toilets on every train. Passengers aged 16 – 25 are much more concerned about journey times and environmental impact than older passengers.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by age

	All pass	engers	16-	25	26	-44	45	-64	65	+
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	2	229	2	238	1	258	1	257
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	1	235	1	238	2	247	3	221
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	162	3	188	3	225	2	233
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	5	150	4	168	4	175	7	154
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	4	152	5	143	5	152	4	161
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	8	126	6	133	6	143	5	158
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	139	7	132	7	140	8	150
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	7	135	9	127	9	130	9	134
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	11	114	10	122	8	134	6	154
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	9	125	8	130	10	126	10	113
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	102	12	102	11	104	11	103
Journey time is reduced	12	102	10	116	11	120	13	91	21	64
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	14	93	13	93	15	90	14	88
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	19	73	14	85	14	91	12	97
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	20	73	16	82	12	95	13	96
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	18	76	17	81	16	87	15	86
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	15	90	15	83	18	67	25	52
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	22	67	19	70	17	72	18	70
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	21	69	20	69	19	65	16	73
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	13	100	18	71	23	50	26	47
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	16	84	21	67	26	48	28	33
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	17	78	22	67	27	46	27	37
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	23	64	24	53	22	53	19	68
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	27	49	26	51	20	59	17	71
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	25	59	23	54	28	45	22	61
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	28	46	27	48	21	54	20	64
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	29	41	28	46	25	49	23	57
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	30	40	29	45	24	50	24	57
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	24	60	25	51	29	31	29	22
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	26	53	30	44	30	25	30	19
Sample size*	14,389		2,386		5,029		4,664		2,310	

Priorities for passengers with disabilities

There are also notable differences in priorities for improvement between passengers with a disability and those without. For passengers with a disability, toilet facilities, step-free access, improved security and availability of staff to help are more important. However, it is also important not to underplay the importance of the 'core product' - passengers with disabilities still place reliability and punctuality as well as fares offering better value for money as their top priorities.



Rail passengers' priorities for improvement passengers with a disability

	All pass	engers	With di	sability	Without	disability
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	1	235	1	247
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	2	224	2	240
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	212	3	200
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	5	145	4	168
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	4	146	5	150
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	7	143	7	138
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	8	132	6	139
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	9	121	8	131
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	6	144	10	127
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	10	108	9	128
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	11	100	12	103
Journey time is reduced	12	102	18	77	11	106
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	14	90	13	91
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	13	92	15	86
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	15	87	14	86
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	12	93	16	81
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	25	64	17	76
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	17	79	18	69
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	19	71	19	68
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	23	64	20	67
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	27	49	21	60
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	28	48	22	60
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	26	63	23	56
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	20	69	24	54
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	16	84	26	49
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	24	64	25	50
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	22	67	27	45
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	21	67	28	44
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	29	35	29	44
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	29	30	37
Sample size*	14,389		1,805		12,077	

There are also differences according to the type of disability recorded by passengers. The sample size allows us to compare differences between passengers with mobility, hearing and sight disabilities.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement passengers with a disability

	Any dis	sability	Mobility or	wheelchair	Hea	ring	Eyes	sight
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	235	1	230	1	238	1	227
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	224	3	216	2	219	2	217
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	212	2	218	3	216	3	197
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	5	145	5	142	7	139	4	145
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	4	146	6	142	6	147	5	143
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	7	143	7	141	4	153	6	134
Accurate and timely information available at stations	8	132	8	129	8	134	8	131
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	121	9	116	9	122	9	119
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	6	144	4	145	5	148	7	132
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	108	11	105	10	110	10	107
Connections with other train services are always good	11	100	12	100	14	96	11	97
Journey time is reduced	18	77	22	70	17	77	18	78
Good connections with other public transport at stations	14	90	15	91	15	85	14	87
Seating area on train is more comfortable	13	92	13	99	12	97	13	92
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	87	16	86	13	96	15	84
Improved personal security on the train	12	93	14	95	11	97	12	93
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	25	64	26	57	25	58	25	69
Improved personal security at the station	17	79	17	81	16	82	17	80
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	71	21	70	18	76	23	69
More environmentally friendly journeys	23	64	25	57	26	55	26	66
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	27	49	27	42	28	43	28	56
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	28	48	28	42	27	52	27	58
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	26	63	24	60	20	69	19	77
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	20	69	20	75	19	71	20	74
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	16	84	10	112	21	68	16	81
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	64	23	69	22	64	24	69
More staff available at stations to help passengers	22	67	18	78	24	61	21	70
More staff available on trains to help passengers	21	67	19	78	23	64	22	70
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	35	29	29	29	36	29	42
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	29	30	26	30	29	30	36
Sample size*	1,805		860		389		276	

^{**}Passengers could select more than one disability.

Priorities by train company

There are also clear differences by train company - most reflecting the market sector the company is operating in.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by train company

1/2 London and South East operators	South to:	East	c	2c		tern ways	Gre Nort		Wes	eat tern way		ater glia
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	246	1	222	1	239	1	255	2	247	1	248
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	236	2	217	2	226	2	239	1	251	2	243
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	193	3	178	3	218	3	190	3	212	3	189
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	167	4	158	4	157	4	183	4	158	4	165
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	153	6	137	6	137	5	164	5	147	6	155
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	8	134	5	140	5	145	9	126	6	137	9	132
Accurate and timely information available at stations	6	142	8	125	8	130	6	152	8	135	7	142
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	133	11	116	9	121	7	142	9	127	8	133
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	10	124	7	129	7	131	10	113	7	136	10	127
Less disruption due to engineering works	7	138	9	125	11	103	8	140	10	118	5	163
Connections with other train services are always good	12	103	13	95	12	99	11	107	11	106	12	108
Journey time is reduced	11	107	14	95	10	109	13	98	12	102	11	110
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	93	16	93	14	90	12	102	13	93	13	96
Seating area on train is more comfortable	16	80	17	84	13	94	17	74	15	88	16	76
Easier to buy the right ticket	14	84	15	94	15	87	15	84	14	90	14	91
Improved personal security on the train	15	82	10	122	17	77	16	79	18	69	15	81
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	76	18	81	16	85	14	84	17	75	18	68
Improved personal security at the station	18	71	12	108	21	67	18	67	23	58	17	68
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	67	19	78	20	70	20	63	20	65	20	65
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	26	49	19	73	21	62	16	77	21	60
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	62	24	59	25	54	22	57	22	61	19	66
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	23	56	27	49	18	76	26	48	21	62	24	50
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	26	50	28	43	23	57	28	41	19	65	27	47
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	55	23	62	22	58	23	50	24	55	23	53
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	22	57	20	70	24	56	19	64	26	49	22	56
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	25	51	25	59	26	54	25	48	25	51	25	50
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	49	21	69	29	45	24	49	28	43	26	48
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	22	68	30	44	27	44	27	43	28	46
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	29	40	27	51	29	40	29	43	29	36
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	34	28	46	30	34	30	37	30	30
Sample size*	7,703		256		380		218		1,444		722	

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by train company

2/2 London and South East operators	Londo South to:	East	Northy	idon vestern lway		don round		Western way	Southe	eastern	Sout	thern	TfL	Rail	Tham	eslink
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	246	2	242	1	229	1	255	1	250	1	253	1	219	1	250
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	236	1	243	2	213	2	240	2	232	2	243	2	199	2	240
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	193	3	209	5	146	3	194	3	196	3	188	4	154	4	179
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	167	4	157	3	163	4	170	4	172	4	172	3	154	3	179
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	153	5	145	4	147	5	161	5	159	5	161	5	144	5	155
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	8	134	6	139	9	130	9	136	9	133	9	126	7	132	9	126
Accurate and timely information available at stations	6	142	7	130	7	139	7	150	6	147	6	149	6	136	6	144
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	133	9	123	8	130	8	140	8	139	8	141	9	129	8	136
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	10	124	8	129	11	111	10	125	10	119	10	116	11	114	11	113
Less disruption due to engineering works	7	138	10	116	6	140	6	154	7	141	7	147	8	132	7	141
Connections with other train services are always good	12	103	13	92	12	108	12	103	12	98	12	109	12	108	12	107
Journey time is reduced	11	107	11	106	10	114	11	107	11	106	11	111	10	115	10	114
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	93	15	83	13	106	13	91	13	88	13	99	13	105	13	97
Seating area on train is more comfortable	16	80	12	97	22	65	16	75	15	81	16	74	19	74	17	74
Easier to buy the right ticket	14	84	14	91	21	65	14	82	16	78	14	87	20	74	14	89
Improved personal security on the train	15	82	16	80	14	100	15	78	14	88	15	80	14	99	15	79
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	76	17	76	16	90	17	73	17	76	17	72	16	80	16	75
Improved personal security at the station	18	71	19	68	15	90	18	67	18	75	18	68	15	89	18	69
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	67	21	67	17	78	19	66	19	65	21	61	18	80	21	63
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	20	67	18	76	21	61	20	64	20	65	22	70	19	67
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	62	18	70	20	69	20	61	22	58	19	66	21	72	20	66
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	23	56	23	64	23	63	27	46	24	54	24	49	23	65	22	61
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	26	50	22	66	30	43	28	44	28	41	27	48	29	50	25	48
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	55	24	55	26	54	22	56	23	56	23	51	25	56	26	48
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	22	57	25	54	19	70	23	52	21	58	22	53	17	80	23	58
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	25	51	27	50	28	51	24	52	25	53	26	48	28	52	27	44
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	49	28	47	25	55	25	49	26	50	25	48	26	55	28	44
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	29	45	27	52	26	48	27	48	28	47	27	53	29	43
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	26	51	24	55	29	35	29	41	29	36	24	60	24	51
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	37	29	49	30	29	30	35	30	31	30	49	30	40
Sample size*	7,703		454		599		1,288		1,178		1,075		418		808	

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by train company

Airport operators	Airpoi	t total	Gatwick	Express	Heathrov	w Express	Stansted	Express
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	2	221	2	223	2	208	2	230
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	1	227	1	229	1	216	1	239
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	172	4	164	3	175	3	178
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	157	3	166	4	149	4	157
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	140	5	141	6	133	5	142
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	137	7	133	5	145	8	132
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	132	8	130	7	129	6	138
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	125	9	123	9	123	9	129
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	10	119	11	115	8	128	11	109
Less disruption due to engineering works	8	130	6	138	10	113	7	135
Connections with other train services are always good	12	106	12	109	11	110	13	95
Journey time is reduced	11	113	10	119	12	103	10	120
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	95	13	96	14	101	17	88
Seating area on train is more comfortable	18	79	17	80	19	78	18	74
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	91	14	94	16	84	14	94
Improved personal security on the train	14	91	15	82	13	101	12	99
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	16	80	18	80	20	76	16	88
Improved personal security at the station	17	80	20	71	15	89	15	89
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	21	72	22	69	18	78	20	73
More environmentally friendly journeys	22	69	21	71	21	74	28	47
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	20	73	16	81	22	67	19	73
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	19	78	19	78	17	83	21	69
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	26	53	26	50	25	59	24	50
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	27	49	27	49	28	52	29	46
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	23	61	23	62	24	60	23	57
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	30	46	29	45	30	49	30	43
More staff available at stations to help passengers	28	48	28	48	29	51	26	48
More staff available on trains to help passengers	29	47	30	45	27	53	27	47
Better mobile phone signal on trains	24	57	24	58	26	53	22	63
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	25	55	25	52	23	61	25	49
Sample size*	322		144		123		65	

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by train company

Long-distance operators	Long Dista	ance Total	Avanti W	est Coast	Cross	Country	East Mi Rail	idlands way		n North Railway	TransP Exp	
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	2	242	2	244	2	240	2	231	2	250	1	254
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	1	246	1	244	1	244	1	242	1	260	2	249
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	213	3	214	3	211	3	205	3	222	3	211
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	152	4	152	4	151	4	147	4	147	4	165
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	143	6	143	5	144	6	139	7	141	5	152
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	141	5	144	6	139	5	141	6	143	7	133
Accurate and timely information available at stations	8	130	8	129	7	134	8	128	8	126	6	138
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	123	9	121	9	126	9	122	9	119	8	132
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	7	137	7	140	8	133	7	133	5	147	9	129
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	110	10	113	11	106	10	109	10	109	10	114
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	99	10	110	12	102	13	98	11	109
Journey time is reduced	12	101	11	99	12	96	11	108	14	94	12	101
Good connections with other public transport at stations	15	88	15	85	13	93	15	88	16	85	14	91
Seating area on train is more comfortable	13	94	14	95	14	88	13	95	12	98	15	88
Easier to buy the right ticket	14	93	13	95	15	85	14	90	11	108	13	91
Improved personal security on the train	17	75	16	77	19	74	17	80	22	62	17	74
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	18	73	22	64	17	79	16	82	21	63	16	75
Improved personal security at the station	22	63	23	64	22	62	21	69	25	51	20	61
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	21	67	20	67	20	67	20	71	20	64	21	60
More environmentally friendly journeys	19	70	19	69	18	75	18	74	17	73	19	68
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	23	62	21	67	23	59	23	61	19	66	22	60
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	20	67	18	73	21	65	19	73	18	67	24	54
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	16	76	17	74	16	80	22	68	15	85	18	72
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	24	54	24	57	25	54	23	55	23	55
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	50	27	47	25	53	26	52	24	52	26	48
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	50	26	48	26	51	27	49	26	49	25	50
More staff available at stations to help passengers	29	44	29	41	29	45	29	43	28	43	28	45
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	45	28	43	28	46	30	42	27	44	27	47
Better mobile phone signal on trains	27	48	25	54	27	47	24	55	29	43	29	40
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	40	30	41	30	39	28	47	30	35	30	32
Sample size*	3,637		957		992		832		659		786	

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement by train operator

Regional operators	Region	al total	Mers	eyrail	Nort	hern	Sco	tRail	Trans for W		West M Rail	
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	246	1	239	1	251	1	246	1	246	1	238
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	236	2	215	2	238	2	241	2	245	2	227
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	209	3	196	3	209	3	211	3	219	3	208
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	168	5	150	4	173	4	166	4	168	4	169
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	149	6	142	5	153	7	144	5	148	5	146
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	146	4	152	7	142	5	154	6	146	6	140
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	7	134	6	142	8	135	8	136	7	134
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	129	9	122	8	133	9	126	9	128	8	127
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	8	133	8	129	9	127	6	147	7	138	9	125
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	112	11	108	10	114	10	106	11	108	10	118
Connections with other train services are always good	11	105	12	104	11	108	11	103	10	108	11	100
Journey time is reduced	12	95	16	87	12	96	12	95	14	90	12	97
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	92	14	93	13	92	15	92	13	94	15	90
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	91	15	87	14	91	14	92	12	95	14	91
Easier to buy the right ticket	16	85	18	79	15	86	13	92	15	82	18	74
Improved personal security on the train	15	85	10	112	16	83	16	79	16	79	13	96
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	19	70	17	77	20	65	17	79	16	86
Improved personal security at the station	18	72	13	97	18	69	19	66	20	65	17	81
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	72	17	82	19	69	17	76	19	69	19	71
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	65	24	58	20	63	18	68	18	69	20	63
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	25	52	30	37	23	56	25	51	25	50	24	54
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	23	56	21	64	24	52	24	57	22	59	22	60
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	21	60	27	52	21	61	22	58	21	65	21	63
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	22	58	20	65	22	56	21	63	23	57	23	55
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	26	49	26	58	27	47	26	50	26	48	25	53
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	53	23	59	25	51	23	57	24	51	26	51
More staff available at stations to help passengers	28	47	25	58	28	46	28	47	28	46	28	48
More staff available on trains to help passengers	27	48	22	60	26	48	27	47	27	47	27	48
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	38	28	50	29	35	29	38	29	35	29	46
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	35	29	40	30	35	30	33	30	32	30	40
Sample size*	4,553		353		1,917		1,168		587		639	

Rail passengers priorities' for improvement by train company

Open access operators	Open acc	cess total	Grand	Central	Hull 1	Trains
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	2	238	2	245	1	235
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	1	239	1	248	2	232
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	218	3	227	3	214
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	149	4	163	7	142
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	7	139	5	132	6	143
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	140	6	131	5	147
Accurate and timely information available at stations	8	126	8	117	8	132
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	115	12	110	9	118
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	5	145	7	126	4	157
Less disruption due to engineering works	11	100	13	110	13	93
Connections with other train services are always good	10	108	11	113	11	103
Journey time is reduced	16	89	9	116	19	71
Good connections with other public transport at stations	12	94	14	101	15	88
Seating area on train is more comfortable	17	83	15	88	16	81
Easier to buy the right ticket	13	92	17	79	12	100
Improved personal security on the train	14	91	20	65	10	107
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	19	66	18	71	22	63
Improved personal security at the station	18	77	25	54	14	90
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	20	66	22	57	18	72
More environmentally friendly journeys	22	65	19	67	23	62
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	26	56	21	60	28	55
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	21	65	16	83	27	56
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	15	90	10	115	17	73
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	23	62	23	55	21	66
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	56	24	55	26	57
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	27	55	26	49	25	59
More staff available at stations to help passengers	28	53	30	38	24	62
More staff available on trains to help passengers	24	57	29	41	20	67
Better mobile phone signal on trains	30	31	28	41	30	26
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	29	35	27	46	29	28
Sample size*	179		70		111	



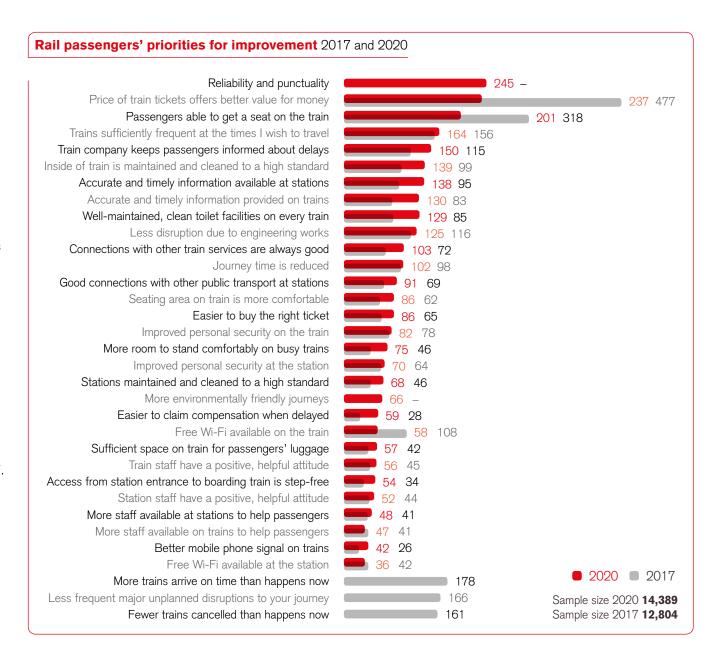
Trends over time

We have looked at priorities for improvement in previous years – the last time being 2017. However, caution needs to be exercised when making comparisons. The priorities for improvement are designed to present a snapshot in time rather than to record changes over time.

One significant change since 2017 is the addition of the new 'reliability and punctuality' priority, replacing three separate performance-related statements: 'more trains arrive on time than happens now', 'less frequent major unplanned disruption to your journey' and 'fewer trains cancelled than happens now'. These three statements were ranked third, fourth and fifth respectively in 2017.

Now combined as 'reliability and punctuality' the collective importance of these, very closely related, aspects of the performance of the train service is clearer. To unpick these individual performance issues, in 2020 we asked a separate question asking passengers to rank the three components. Passengers considered the prompt arrival of trains most important, followed by fewer train cancellations and then less frequent unplanned disruptions. This order is consistent across key sub-groups including journey purpose.

One difference is that free Wi-Fi on the train is no longer as high a priority in 2020. This may be due to improvements made to the availability and quality of Wi-Fi in recent years, or passengers' increasing use of their own mobile data. For illustrative purposes only, the following chart shows the main differences between 2020 and 2017.



What do passengers want at stations?

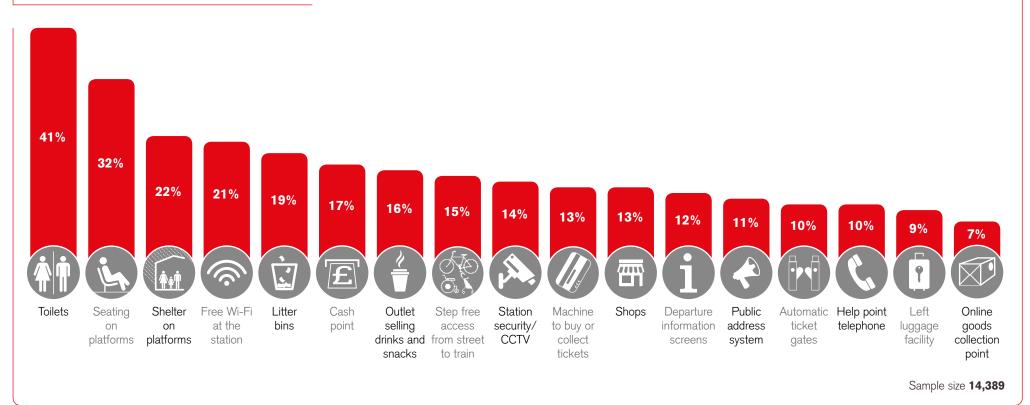
It is clear that train performance and the experience on the train tend to feature more prominently in the overall list of priorities for improvement than station issues. However, there is still value in identifying passengers' views to help inform station improvements.

Having completed the main priorities exercise, passengers were presented with a separate, more detailed

list of station facilities and asked to select which they felt needed to be improved at the station where they start their most frequent journey. The station facilities included in the list comprised platform facilities (such as seating, toilets, shelter), information (departure boards, public address system, help points), general station amenities (refreshment outlets, shops, cash points), ticketing and step-free access.

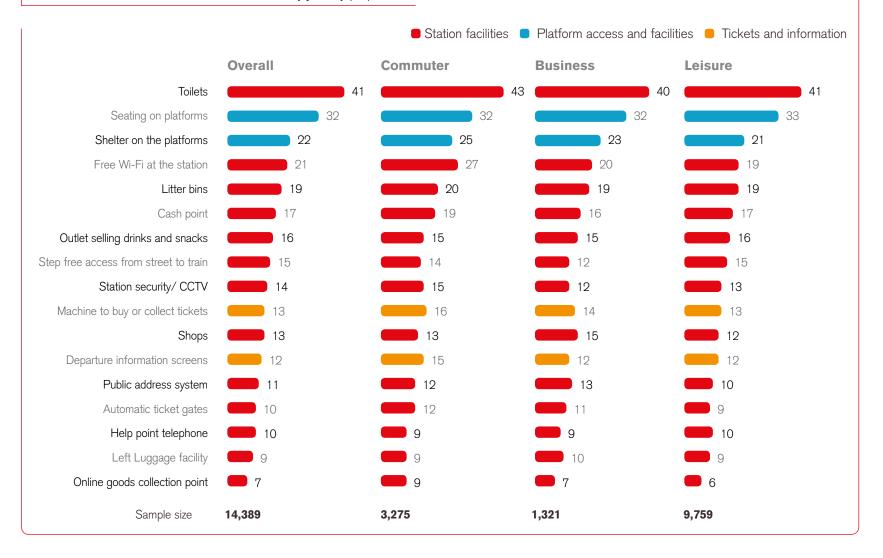
The research again shows a guite pragmatic approach from passengers. The emphasis is on improving basic station amenities: toilets, seating and shelter. Next is the provision of free Wi-Fi, though continuing the theme we identified earlier in the report regarding Wi-Fi on trains, passengers place less emphasis on station Wi-Fi than in 2017.

Priorities for improving station facilities 2020



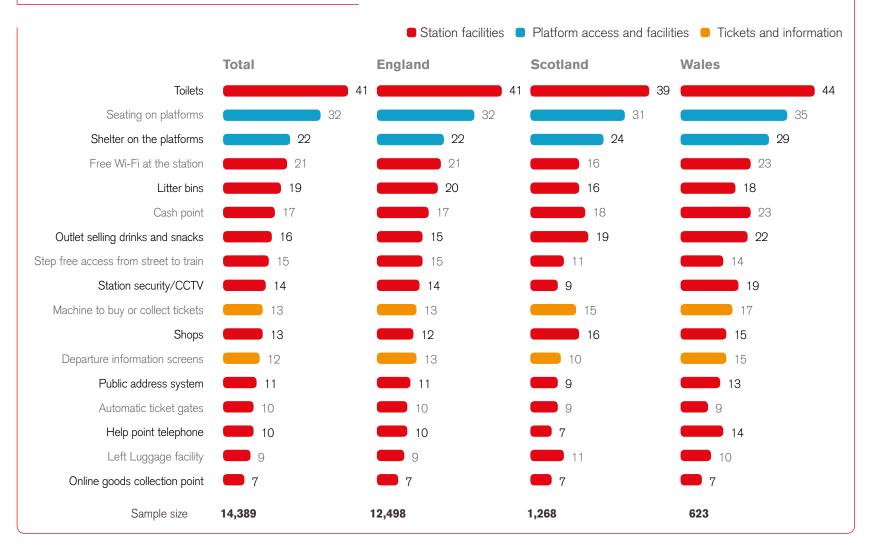
Overall, passengers with different journey purposes share the same station improvement priorities, although commuters are more likely to think many of the improvements are necessary at the station they travel from most often, in particular free Wi-Fi.

Priorities for improving station facilities by journey purpose (%)



It is also noticeable that passengers in Wales are more concerned than passengers overall about a number of station improvements - including cash points, drink/snack outlets and station security/ CCTV.

Priorities for improving station facilities by nation (%)



Appendix A: Method

Using Max-Diff to measure priorities for improvement

What is Max-Diff:

Maximum Difference Scaling (Max-Diff) is a way of evaluating the importance (or preference) of a number of alternatives. It is a discrete choice technique where respondents are asked to make simple best/worst choices.

How does Max-Diff work?

Participants complete a series of exercises. In each exercise they are presented with five items and asked to choose which is the highest priority for improvement and which is the lowest.

In order to determine passengers' overall priorities for improvement, the following exercise was used in the survey. It was repeated 15 times covering all 30 possible priorities:

Over the next few screens you will be shown lists of five possible improvements to stations and trains. For each list of five please select:

- a the one improvement you would most like to be made
- **b** the one improvement you think it is least Most Least important important important to make. mprovement improvement for you for you [Insert rotated option from list] [Insert rotated option from list] 2 2 3 3 [Insert rotated option from list] [Insert rotated option from list] 4 4 5 5 [Insert rotated option from list]

The table below lists the 30 improvement priority areas included in the 2020 research, which were included in the Max-Diff exercise described previously.

Improvement priorities - areas included

Ranking in 2017	Improvement priority areas
1	Price of train tickets offers better value for money
-	•
2	Passengers able to get a seat on the train
6	Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel
7	Less disruption due to engineering works
8	Train company keeps passengers informed about delays
9	Free Wi-Fi available on the train
10	Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard
11	Journey time is reduced
12	Accurate and timely information available at stations
13	Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train
14	Accurate and timely information provided on trains
15	Improved personal security on the train
16	Connections with other train services are always good
17	Good connections with other public transport at stations
18	Easier to buy the right ticket

Ranking	
in 2017	Improvement priority areas
19	Improved personal security at the station
20	Seating area on train is more comfortable
21	Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard
22	More room to stand comfortably on busy trains
23	Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude
24	Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude
25	Free Wi-Fi available at the station
26	Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage
27	More staff available at stations to help passengers
28	More staff available on trains to help passengers
29	Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free
30	Easier to claim compensation when delayed
31	Better mobile phone signal on trains
NEW	Reliability and punctuality
NEW	More environmentally friendly journeys

The table on the right lists the areas that were included in the 2017 research but excluded from the 2020 wave of the research.

Improvement priorities – areas removed since 2017

Improvement priority areas

More trains arrive on time than happens now Less frequent major unplanned disruption to your journey Fewer trains cancelled than happens now

Research approach

14,389 online interviews were completed with rail passengers in Great Britain. Fieldwork took place from 11-26 March 2020. This was just as the Covid-19 pandemic was taking hold but before any significant debate had started regarding social distancing and managing crowding on public transport. There is no evidence of Covid-19 having changed passengers' perceptions as to the priorities for improvement at the time fieldwork was undertaken. However, it is reasonable to expect that attitudes to crowding, cleanliness and personal safety may have changed subsequently, albeit perhaps just temporarily.

The research made use of the omnibus survey managed by Populus, an independent survey research agency, to understand the nationally representative demographic profile of those who had travelled by train in the past three months. Based on this data interlocking quotas were set by age, sex and social grade (ABC $_1$ /C $_2$ DE) for the majority of interviews but then relaxed for the final 500 to facilitate a boosted number of interviews for those train companies that were poorly represented at that point.

Passengers were asked about the train journey they make most often. There were 14,389 people (or journeys) covered in the research. However, each passenger's journey could consist of more than one leg

(for instance, the overall journey could have begun on a Northern service but finished on a Transport for Wales service). In the research each journey was recorded against all operators involved (in our example, against both Northern and Transport for Wales). However, when aggregating into overall totals a person was only counted

once (for example in the Northern/Transport for Wales example the two legs would just count as one journey in the 'regional' sector). As a result, if added together, the sample sizes for each individual train company will add up to more than the total number of people/journeys taken (14,389).

Number of interviews, by operator

London and South	
East operators	Interviews
c2c	256
Chiltern Railways	380
Great Northern	218
Great Western Railway	1444
Greater Anglia	722
London Northwestern Railway	454
London Overground	599
South Western Railway	1288
Southeastern	1178
Southern	1075
TfL Rail	418
Thameslink	808

Interviews
957
4
992
832
659
786

Airport operators	Interviews
Gatwick Express	144
Heathrow Express	123
Stansted Express	65

Regional operators	Interviews
Merseyrail	353
Northern	1917
ScotRail	1168
Transport for Wales	587
West Midlands Railway	639

Open access operators	Interviews
Grand Central	70
Hull Trains	111

Contact Transport Focus

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council Transport Focus is the independent consumer organisation representing the interests of:

- all users of England's motorways and major
 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network)
- rail passengers in Great Britain
- bus, coach and tram users across England outside London.

We work to make a difference for all transport users